Name of the Candidate	Ms. Vaishali Jundre
Permanent Registration Number (PRN)	10069001008
Name of the Faculty	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Name of Research Guide	Dr. Z. N. Patil
Date of Confirmation	5th July, 2011
Title of the Research	Phonological, Lexical and Grammatical Problems of Arabic Speakers of English at ELTIS

SYNOPSIS ON

PHONOLOGICAL, LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL PROBLEMS

OF ARABIC SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH AT ELTIS

Submitted to:

Symbiosis International University

Pune

Research Proposal of Ph.D. Thesis

Phonological, Lexical and Grammatical Problems of Arabic Speakers of English at ELTIS

Submitted to

Symbiosis International University

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Vaishali Bhushan Jundre

Under the guidance of

Dr. Z. N. Patil

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Symbiosis International University
Pune – 411004

May 9, 2011

This century has witnessed a lot of changes in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language. The roles of teachers have evolved through a lot of experiments and methods. From grammar translation to audio lingual to communicative teaching, English language teachers and learners have experienced tremendous changes.

These processes of teaching and learning have been influenced not only by the evolution of methods and techniques but also by the international, cultural, economic and technological changes in the world. English has come out as a language of communication across the world. It is no longer a foreign language to the non-native users of English. Graddol (2006) observes that 3% of the world population migrates thus resulting in change in the social and linguistic mix of destination countries. The use of English as a lingua franca becomes useful in such cases. English as a global lingua franca has helped to transform the world and in turn the world has transformed English.

Kachru (1992) in his model of three circles describes the expanse of English in three circles. The inner circle consisting of the native speakers, the outer circle consisting of countries that use English as a second or official language and the expanding circle which consists of countries for whom English is a foreign language. As these circles are not static but dynamic in nature, Kachru observes that more and more countries are now entering the outer circle, thus pointing out at the expanse of English as a global language of communication.

This process of leaving the expanding circle and entering into the outer circle is a long one. It brings along a lot of influence and interference of the mother tongue of the learners into the native variety. These factors give rise to problems, errors and deviations in the use of English. These problems or deviations are an outcome of many criteria such as the extent of use of the target language in everyday life of the learner, exposure to the target language, sociolinguistic and cultural environment, educational process, similarities and differences in the mother tongue of the speaker and the target language and so on. Building an awareness of such situations and trying to find solutions to it is a challenge today.

One prominent group marching into the outer circle from the expanding circle is that of Arab countries. Arabic speakers like other learners of English have their own set of problems and influences.

This research proposal is an attempt to investigate the typical English language problems of the Arabic speakers at ELTIS. ELTIS has a lot of students coming from Arab countries such as

Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and more and therefore the research will involve many students' groups at ELTIS as samples. This research will observe these students and note their problem areas. It will study deviations of these Arabic speakers and try to bring them closer to the native usage. As the area of research is wide, comprising phonological, lexical and grammatical problems, it will be based on a select word list. This word list will act as a point of study, identification, analysis and comparison for the entire exercise. All the three areas- phonological, lexical and grammatical will be studied with reference to the word list. The research will involve methods like sampling and testing, recording and comparing and questionnaires and interviews. It will also include the study of basic structures of the Arabic, in order to understand their problems better.

This research aims at deriving patterns of skill-based teaching for these groups of learners at ELTIS. The derived data will have tested teaching material which will help the teachers in actual teaching. It will be able to build teachers' awareness and understanding towards their students with respect to their set of language learning problems. This research aims at building activities, workbooks and exercises that will bring the students' performance to a good level of intelligible communication.

Aims and Objectives:

i) To understand the phonological, lexical and grammatical deviations found in West Asian varieties of English
ii) To identify and evaluate language problems and deviations in Arabic speakers
iii) To suggest ways and means to neutralize the deviations and enhance approximation to a native variety of English
iv) To prepare guidelines and teaching materials to be used for the target learners

The research will begin with preparation of a special word list for Arabic speakers considering their typical problems and deviations. The list will have words that are typically found to be problem words for Arabic speakers. For example, while considering the phonological problems of these learners, a good number of words containing phonemes /p/ and /b/ will be enlisted. Arabic does not have the sound /p/ and therefore it tends to use /b/ wherever it occurs. Articulating sound /p/ is difficult for these learners. Similarly, /f/ and /v/ are mostly confused and interchanged by the Arabic speakers so the word list will have words of these sounds. Additionally it will have words with consonant clusters which form a major problem area for the

Arabic speakers. Inserting a short vowel sound in between consonant clusters is the typical tendency of Arabic speakers. For example: stopped will be ‘istobbid’ for them.

Some samples will be collected after the word list is ready. These samples will be in the form of recorded samples- audio recorded and recorded in the form of writing, test papers, questionnaires and more.

The samples will be collected at two different times, once, before any input from the teacher and second time after the input. These two steps will help in identification of problems and deviations. The learners will be made aware of the problems and deviations and guided to the correct usage. It will help to derive some conclusions on learner behavior and learning. The material used for the identification process will help in making the teaching material and the making of the guidelines too.

A variety of problems in all the three fields- phonology, lexis and grammar will be dealt with through these samples. Phonology, for example will have samples of phonemic deviations and consonant clusters. Grammatical deviations such as dropping of the copula, the use of the passive, the use of pronouns etc… will be recorded. Lexical deviations due to interpretations of collocations, optical reversal and reverse visualization will be identified.

The research will then proceed to help the learners to reduce on the problem areas. It will identify the lexis and discourse elements in the learners’ language. Furthermore it will identify the pragmatic particles, phonology and syntax in Arabic that leads to deviating usage in the target language. The research will touch upon areas of interference and interlanguage with the help of the specially created word list.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter will contain general introduction to the subject. It will define the nature and scope of the topic. The chapter will comment on the kind of learners that arrive at ELTIS and the kinds of problems they have. It will make a note on the entry level of the learners, the educational scenario in their respective countries and its impact on their proficiency in the target language at that point of time. How the socio-cultural environment influences or hinders foreign or second language learning in their countries will be studied at this point. It will also study the usual curriculum design for English language learning in their countries at the graduate and post graduate levels and thus try to focus on their problems as adult learners. It will thus identify the scope of the study in the student perspective.

Introduction will also elaborate on the previous survey or research in this area. It will take reference of the research already done in the three areas of phonology, lexis and grammar of Arabic speakers. This will help this research plan its line of functioning.

Following that, the chapter will make a detailed comment on the varieties of English. The native varieties, their role in global communication and their significance today will be studied at this juncture. How the other varieties of English or the World Englishes are gaining significance in this world of globalization and how the native speakers need to build tolerance towards and understanding for these varieties today will also be have a significant mention in this chapter. Despite the importance of multilingualism, English stands tall even today. Role of English as the access language to knowledge and technology, as the medium of communication across countries of diverse cultures and languages and as a global language will be discussed. The chapter will mention the West Asian varieties and their characteristics at this stage.

The concluding part of this chapter will thus define the nature and scope of this research.

Chapter II: Phonological Problems of Arabic speakers of English

A comparison on how the phonology of the mother tongue of Arabic speakers is different from that of the native speakers will be the core element of this chapter. The peculiar similarities and differences in the phonology of English and Arabic will be studied. It will present the differences in the stress and intonation in both English and Arabic along with their problems of pronunciation.

While doing this the chapter will comment on the varied natures of Arabic and English. Arabic is a Semitic language and is based on consonant roots rather than on vowels. Some phonemes in the English language are absent in Arabic thus giving rise to pronunciation problems. Arabic does not have the sound /p/, therefore the Arabic speakers substitute it with the sound /b/. Hence, park becomes *bark,* pressure becomes *bressure*. Similarly the sounds /f/ and /v/ are often confused. The Arabic speakers are unable to say /v/ and thus end up using /f/ in its place. Therefore we hear *fery* in place of very or *ferandah* in place of verandah.

The word list will contain a good number of such words that will be recorded for sampling and used for identifying the influence of the mother tongue on the learners' speaking habits and styles in the second language. They will help analyse causes of deviations. The chapter will suggest ways in which the problems could be dealt with, with the help of exercises and the language laboratory.

A consonant cluster is another problematic area for Arabic speakers. Their problem with the initial, middle and end clusters leads to typical errors in pronunciations. E.g. price becomes *pirice*, dictionary becomes *dicitionary* or managed becomes *managid*. They insert a short vowel sound to say the word. Why do they tend to do so? What are the factors that influence such pronunciation? Such and more such questions will be tackled in this chapter.

Moreover the stress and intonation pattern of Arabic is quite different from English. The chapter will try to identify the differences in the same and how these differences lead to problems of comprehension. The analysis of these distinctions will further help in devising exercises for bettering cognition and comprehension through understanding of the stress and intonation of the target language. For example: The influence of the Arabic sheddah or the harsh sounding /h/ in the stress pattern of Arabic is a strong factor.

The chapter will throw some light on the letter-sound disparity of English language that creates problems for the Arabic speakers. English has the concept of silent letters and the spellings do not predict the actual pronunciation thus usually confusing the Arabic speakers.

Chapter III: Lexical Problems of Arabic speakers of English

This is a chapter that will talk on reverse visualization, idiomatic expression and collocations in Arabic influencing the learning of English. It will study the importance of consonants in the Arabic language and that of vowels in the English language in word meanings. How the semantic field is defined due to consonants in Arabic and vowels in English will be illustrated in

the chapter. Moreover though the Arabic language has a horizontal orientation, it is written from the right to left that is just the opposite of English writing style. This orientation of the Arabic language leads to problems like optical reversal and reverse visualization while learning English. The Arabic speakers usually get confused with ‘b’ and‘d’, ‘p’ and ‘q’ and thus tend to produce semantically diverse units.

Some English words and sounds are very close to some taboo words in Arabic. The chapter will exemplify how these words cause miscommunication or misinterpretation. Interpretation of English idioms is also influenced by Arabic. This chapter will try to find the intercultural aspect that hinders or promotes usage of certain utterances and expressions.

Developing a workbook on handwriting especially for Arabic speakers is a part of this chapter. This workbook will be created after the study of the lexical problems like reverse visualization and optical reversal and thus facilitate better learning through developing writing skills. The practice of writing may strongly influence the learners’ reading habits. This seems to be an unusual sequence of practicing writing for better reading, but may prove highly useful in the learning process.

Thus this chapter aims at reducing the impact of the mother tongue on lexical concept development through constructive exercises for promoting better language learning.

Chapter IV: Grammatical Problems of Arabic speakers of English

Grammar has always been a challenge for teachers and learners of ESL or EFL. Whether to teach language based on grammatical rules or introduce grammar with the help of deductive method has always been a debatable issue. It is observed that second language learners have always laid importance on grammar but also have tended to get confused due to the rules of structures and forms.

The chapter will thus deal with the grammatical problems faced by Arabic speakers. The grammatical structures of both Arabic and English differ from each other to a large extent right from morphology to syntax. Arabic is a Semitic language and Semitic languages are commonly written without the vowel marks which would indicate the short vowels and they all have a predictable root-pattern system. For example- Arabic has a three-consonant root base for word formation whereas English is based on vowels. The words are formally as well as semantically related in Arabic, for example- *kattaab* is writer and *ketaab* is book, *jarraah* is a surgeon and *majrooh* is the wounded. Whereas in English the word reader is absolutely different from the

word radar and the difference is due to vowels. This difference in Arabic and English leads to the problem of vowel blindness in Arabic speakers of English.

Some other differences are the sentence structure (It is V-S-O in Arabic and S-V-O in English), the dropping of the copula (Arabic does not have the verb 'to be' in the present tense), repetition of pronouns in a sentence (e.g. Mary she comes to school every day.), omission of the indefinite article (Arabic does not have an indefinite article) and more.

How mother tongue influence leads to grammatical errors and how it leads to problems of interference will be discussed in detail in this chapter. According to Selinker, Swain & Durmas' (1975) and Plann and Ramirez (1976), first language influenced errors are majorly in the domain of word order. e.g. - Arabic speakers use an adjective after a noun according to his/ her own mother tongue order. So s/he tends to say, 'The building very tall.'

Excessive application of the overgeneralization strategies i.e. ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete applications of rules due to mother tongue influence try to overlap or interrelate to the language learnt or the target language. This chapter will touch upon these aspects of interference. The use of samples, exercises, tests etc…will support the study. The exercises developed for this study will provide as material of teaching grammar.

Chapter V: Conclusions

At the end, the study will be able to produce some conclusions on the research. On the one hand, it will help students to locate their problem areas and help themselves to eradicate or reduce on them and on the other; it will help teachers to have a defined method of teaching or line of dealing with the problem areas of Arabic speakers.

The research will observe-

a) Tendencies of Arabic speakers at ELTIS, and

b) Methods used by teachers to help students with their language problems.

Both these observations will help to develop materials and methods to deal with the problems more systematically and in a structured manner at ELTIS or elsewhere. Apart from the theoretical research so far, this research will provide practical ways and methods to deal with three kinds of problems of Arabic speakers at a single stance.

This research will open areas of further study in the various aspects related to Arabic speakers.

a. Speech functions: How speech functions in Arab variety of English is different from that of the so called native English. e.g. complimenting, apologizing, kinship terminology, etc.
b. Use of discourse markers like subsequently/ nevertheless/ consequently etc… and their similarities or differences between Arab and the native variety of English.
c. Are the rhetorical functions like describing/ explaining/ classifying/ reasoning/ comparing/ contrasting in both the varieties same or different? How does it differ due to cultural features of those respective languages?
d. How is the discourse in the Arab and Native variety of English organized? Do both the varieties have different patterns of organization?
e. Developing speech tests with the help of ICT specifically for Arabic speakers.

References & Bibliography:

Corder, S. P. (1986). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press

Crystal, David. (1997) *English as a global language,* Cambridge: CUP

Graddol, David. (2006) *English Next.* London, British Council.

Jenkins, Jennifer. (2010) *World Englishes*. Oxon, Routledge.

Kachru, Braj B. (1992) *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures (2nd edition),* : Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, B.B., Kachru, Y.B. and Sridhar, S.N. (ed.) (2008). *Language in South Asia*. Cambridge: CUP.

Kachru,Braj. 'Models for Non-native Englishes' in Kachru, B.B. (ed.) (1992) *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures,* 2nd edition, Urbana, IL: University of Illionios Press

Patil, Z.N. (2006) 'On the Nature and Role of English in Asia'. *The Linguistics Journal, Vol.2*

Swan, Michael, Smith, Bernard. 2001. *Learner English*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, CUP.

Abbas, Shemeem (1993). The power of English in Pakistan. *World Englishes, 12* (2), 147-156.

Brumfit , C.J. (1984). *Communicative methodology in Language teaching – the roles of fluency and accuracy,* Cambridge, CUP.

Kachru, B.B. and Nelson, C.L. (2005) World Englishes. *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching,* ed. by McKay, S.L. and Hornberger, N.H., Cambridge, CUP.

Kahane, H. and Kahane, R. (1986). A typology of the prestige language. *Language*, 62, 495-508.

Dr Khan I. A. (2011). *Role of Applied Linguistics in the Teaching of English in Saudi Arabia. International Journal of English Linguistics*, Vol. 1, No. 1; March 2011. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education 105

Krashen, Stephen D. (1976). *Formal & informal linguistics environments in language learning and language acquisition,* TESOL Quarterly, 10,2, June: 157-68

Littlewood, W. (1984) *Foreign and Second Language Learning*, Cambridge, CUP.

Rivers, Wilga M. (1972). *Speaking with many tongues*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Robinson, P. (2001). *Cognition and Second language Instruction*, Cambridge, CUP.

Tahaineh Y. S. (2010). *Arab EFL University Students' Errors in the Use of Prepositions*. ISSN 0974-8741

Vaishali Bhushan Jundre

Research Scholar

Dr. Z. N. Patil

Research Supervisor